

THE

4th

INTERNATIONAL

★ WHAT IT IS

★ WHAT IT AIMS AT

By MICHEL PABLO

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PREFATORY NOTE

It is now 20 years since the Fourth International was founded.

In order briefly to make known its history, its policy, and its present goals, we think it useful to publish the text of a lecture I gave on this subject at the Summer School of the Independent Labour Party, at Ruskin College, Oxford, on August 12th 1958.

MICHEL PABLO

THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL

WHAT IT IS

WHAT IT AIMS AT

The Fourth International is the organization founded in September 1938 by Leon Trotsky and his companions.

Its history is in reality inseparable from that of the fate of the October Revolution, the U S S R, and the Third International.

In 1917 the Russian workers and peasants, guided by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, took power and established the world's first workers' state.

But this victory was won in conditions that were particularly difficult and not very propitious for the flowering of a genuine socialist regime: Russia was then a very backward country both economically and culturally, with an overwhelmingly peasant majority; it had, between 1918 and 1921, suffered immensely from the civil war and from the intervention of the imperialist armies; the Revolution had remained isolated, for no other proletariat in Europe or in the rest of the world had succeeded in conquering its own class enemies and also reaching power.

The building of socialism in the U S S R therefore was carried out in unfavorable national and international surroundings, which from the beginning affected the character and evolution of the country's political regime.

The economic and cultural difficulties of the back-

ward and isolated Russia of that period were already, even in Lenin's day, producing *bureaucratic deformations* of the Worker's State: the soviets, the trade unions, and the Bolshevik Party itself, had a tendency to become subordinated to and absorbed by the political and economic apparatus of the State, which began to escape from the direct control of the masses and to exclude them from its administration.

Out of the *bureaucratization* of the workers' organizations subjected to the influence of the State, there was visible under Lenin the embryonic growth of a social stratum distinct from the proletariat, privileged in comparison with the proletariat's economic and social level, and more and more powerful: a *bureaucracy*.

Lenin, in the very last years of his life, became gradually alert to this danger, and was the first to try to fight against it. Especially from 1921 on, the question of *democracy* in the Party and in the country and the struggle against *bureaucratization* divided the Bolshevik Party into tendencies, which themselves reflected, in the last analysis, the new social forces in conflict within developing soviet society.

The origins of what is now called Trotskyism lie in that period, around 1923, when Leon Trotsky succeeded Lenin at the head of the tendency which was fighting inside the Bolshevik Party for proletarian democracy and against incipient *bureaucratization*, against *nascent Stalinism*. The documents of the period give ample proof of this affirmation, particularly Trotsky's *New Course*,¹ a real charter of proletarian democracy and of a democratic regime in the Revolutionary Party.

1 A set of articles published serially in *Pravda* in December 1923.

The struggle already begun toward 1923 within the Bolshevik Party against its bureaucratization, which soon brought in its train that of the country, and beyond it that of the entire Third International, filled a whole period extending till 1928, a date at which Leon Trotsky, expelled from the Party in 1927, was exiled from the country by Stalin, and took refuge in Turkey, on the island of Prinkipo. The years from 1923 to 1928 were the period of the formation of the *Left Opposition within the Bolshevik Party*.

History will recall that the struggle which the Left Opposition succeeded in carrying on within its party, and to a certain extent within the Third International, was of fundamental importance both on the ideological level and on the practical level for the survival of the revolutionary Marxist movement. For it showed that Stalinism — far from having been, as some affirm, the natural and as it were organic prolongation of Lenin's Bolshevism — was forced, in order to grow and win out, to fight for years on end against a whole wing of the Bolshevik Party, composed of its best elements, the élite corps of the Bolsheviks who had made October and created and led the Third International under Lenin.

Stalinism found the way to enforce its rule only by actually destroying the ideological and organizational framework of Lenin's Bolshevism.

From 1923 to 1928 the Russian Left Opposition struggled and took form around the following ideological and political subjects, whose immense importance it is still impossible to overestimate:

Against the bureaucratization of the party and the country, for proletarian and socialist democracy, against Stalin's theory (worked up for the first time in the Autumn of 1924) of "socialism in a single

country," for the World Socialist Revolution,² against the uncontrollable development of the NEP, for a planned economy,³ against the Third International's right-wing opportunist policy in England in the 1926 general strike,⁴ and in China during the 1925-1927

2 Faithful to the teachings of Marx and Lenin, Trotsky and his companions conceived the completion of socialism as possible only on an international basis.

Socialism, as a regime producing *more, better, and cheaper per capita* than the most developed capitalism, is inconceivable within the limits of a national state, however rich it may be. Capitalism developed only on the basis of an *international division of labor*. Socialism, a regime of productive forces far higher than *the most developed capitalism*, requires even more an international, and indeed world-wide, basis.

Trotskyists do not deny the possibility of the victory of the Revolution in a single country, and the beginning of the building of socialism in a single country. What they deny is that socialism can *reach its completion* within national limits, and they are opposed to the orientation of the autarkic economy of a "national socialism."

The importance of this question is not merely terminological. In reality it conditions the whole *strategy of the revolutionary proletariat*. Stalinism subordinated the action of the international proletariat to the building of socialism in the USSR. The Fourth International, on the contrary, considers that the best way to defend the USSR and to complete the building of socialism in that country, is constantly to broaden the economic base of socialism by working for the victory of the Revolution in other countries, for the victory of the World Revolution.

3 Despite Stalinist mythology, the historical fact is that the idea of a planned economy was put forward by Trotsky as early as 1923. Beginning with 1925 the Russian Left Opposition fought systematically for the drawing up of a plan to speed up the systematic industrialization of the country, as against the Stalin-Bukharin line based at that time on encouraging the kulaks to grow rich.

4 During which Stalin formed a united front at the top with the reformist bureaucracy of the trade unions, which permitted it to betray — without organized resistance and without any profit to the English CP — the magnificent fight of the English proletariat.

Revolution,⁵ for a Leninist policy in the international communist movement.

We can find all these themes made fully explicit in the Left Opposition's most famous document, its 1926 platform, signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, among others, and intended for the XVth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which was held in 1927.

Exile enabled Leon Trotsky to spread the ideas of the Russian Left Opposition in the wider circles of the Third International and of the international revolutionary movement in general.

Thus there began a new period in what can now be called the pre-history of the Fourth International, that of the formation of the *International Left Opposition*, with the creation of groups and contacts in a large number of countries on all the continents. This period lasted from 1928 to 1933, till Hitler took power.

During this period the International Left Opposition struggled for the democratic reform of the Soviet Communist Party and of the Third International. It hoped that the pressure of events and of the masses on the bureaucratic apparatus would be sufficient to bring about a "return to Lenin" by the Communist Parties.

In Germany between 1928 and 1933 the decisive fight developed between the proletariat — organized in two big parties, the Socialist and the Communist — and fascism.

The International Left Opposition, conscious of the historic importance of this struggle, called for a militant policy of United Front between the two parties, from the ranks to the top, aimed toward the seizure

5 When Stalin supported Chiang Kai-Shek and ordered the Communist Party to subordinate itself to the Kuomintang, the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie led by Chiang.

of power. The Communist Party, on the contrary, following the Kremlin's directives, applied a sectarian policy that maintained the division in the workers' movement and aggravated its confusion about the danger Hitler represented and about the best means to fight it. Here we are right in the middle of the famous "Third Period."⁶

The International Left Opposition, in a series of important documents that even today retain all their validity, clarified the question of the nature of fascism, the class character of the Social-Democracy, and the United Front. It used all its strength to arouse and spur healthy reactions in the German CP and the Third International, in order to avoid the disaster of a Hitler victory. The German CP, however, as well as the Third International and the Kremlin, remained completely deaf to these appeals.

Hitler's victory in 1933 sealed the fate not only of the German CP, which has never recovered from that wreck, but also of the entire Third International. *In the light of a crucial historical experience these organizations, incapable of any healthy reaction, showed themselves to be incurably bureaucratized.* The International Left Opposition drew the conclusion that thenceforth it was necessary to work for the construc-

6 During which Stalin had brought forward the theory of "social-fascism," which identified social-democracy with fascism, as well as the policy of the "united front from below." Both these rendered practically impossible any united front with the social-democracy, while minimizing the danger of fascism in the understanding of the workers.

It was following on the disaster to which this "ultra-left" policy led that Stalin, in 1934, went over to the opposite policy of the "Popular Front," i.e., alliances at the top with the reformist bureaucracy and the so-called "liberal" bourgeois, such as the French and Spanish Radicals.

tion of new revolutionary Marxist parties and a new International.

Thus began a new period in the pre-history of the Fourth International, running from 1933 to 1938, during which the movement for the formation of a new International, the Fourth International, was launched.

Certainly that period was not propitious for rallying great masses around the idea, the programme, and the organization of a new International. The consequences of the fascist victory in Germany were spreading through the whole workers' movement and the spectre of a new world war was being silhouetted on the horizon.

Furthermore, wherever the masses went over to the revolutionary offensive to block and crush fascism, as in Spain from 1934 to 1939 and in France from 1936 to 1938, the Socialist and Communist leaderships, collaborating with the bourgeois parties in "Popular Fronts," led the movements to failure and defeat. In a general way the 1933-1938 period accentuated the general decline of the international revolutionary movement and witnessed accumulated defeats.

Why then did the International Left Opposition persist in its propaganda and organization of a new International?

In one sense precisely because this evolution of the international workers' movement demonstrated the complete and irremediable bankruptcy of the traditional leaderships and consequently the imperious need for a new leadership. Now for such a goal, once its necessity has been historically proved, a start has to be made. It was necessary to begin seriously to prepare the future, by organizing in a single world party all revolutionary Marxists who were convinced of the

correctness of the programme that the International Left Opposition had been capable of forging, not artificially, but in the fire of the class struggle, both in the U S S R and in the entire world.

It was beginning with the moment when we became sure, by the repeated proof of historic events, of the bankruptcy of the old leaderships, and had ourselves hammered out a complete programme, distinct from any other international current in the workers' movement, that we formed a new International.

We are convinced, furthermore, that this programme which unites us in one international organization is indeed the programme of revolutionary Marxism in our time, basically different from the political behavior of both the Socialists and of the Communist Parties that are lieges of the Kremlin.

As for the argument that broad masses were not yet following us, we did not consider it sufficient to postpone the proclamation of what was already a factual reality: our existence as a revolutionary Marxist international organization.

In order to make the masses come to us, we must show them a quite distinct banner, must set them an example, and not wait for the as-it-were spontaneous genesis of new leadership.

Naturally we have no illusions about our possibilities of guiding the action of the class as long as our mass base continues to be as limited as it is. We are today still only the *embryo* of the mass International of tomorrow. It was this reasoning which was also at the origin of the decision taken in September 1938 to proclaim — in spite of everything, at a quite culminating moment of imperialist and Stalinist reaction, and already on the eve of the Second World War — the birth of the Fourth International.

The main political document issued by the Founding Congress of the Fourth International was that called "The Transitional Programme," mainly worked out by Leon Trotsky himself.

This programme bore clear evidence to the fact that the Fourth International as an organization had arisen from within the living international workers' movement, and that it had the full intention of integrating itself further therein, and not of being either a sect or a general propaganda group. Indeed the Transitional Programme is resolutely aimed at revolutionary action by the masses on the path to the goal of winning power.

The Transitional Programme aimed at extending a bridge between the objective conditions of capitalism ripe for socialism, and the retarded political consciousness of the masses, influenced by the traditional Socialist and Communist leaderships.

The Transitional Programme contains a whole series of dialectically interconnected slogans which — starting out from the most immediate economic and political demands of the masses — have as their goal lifting the fight up to the level of the struggle for power, for the Workers' and Peasants' Government, the final stage before the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

These slogans, far from being arbitrary and "intellectualist," are in fact the result of a thorough analysis of the objective conditions of capitalism in which the day-by-day struggle of the proletariat takes place. They furthermore take into account the real experience of the international workers' movement in our time, and even — in their form — of the workers' mentality.

The conception of the Transitional Programme is profoundly revolutionary and dialectical, which fundamentally distinguishes it from the programmes of the Socialist or Communist Parties.

These parties have a maximum general programme which supposedly aims at the establishment of a proletarian power and a socialist society, and also a minimum programme which insists upon elementary economic and political demands and reforms within the framework of the capitalist regime. But between these two programmes there exists *no bridge*, no link connecting one with the other — the minimum with the maximum — through a chain of dialectically interconnected transitional demands.

In reality both the Socialist and the Communist Parties have *in practice* relegated their *maximum* programme to the Greek kalends and recall it only on "great occasions" in order to draw the masses demagogically to their parties. *In practice* they apply only the minimum programme within the framework of the capitalist regime. And we know why.

For in reality the Socialist Parties, while still having a working-class base, are led by apparatuses at the service of the regime of bourgeois democracy; while the Communist Parties are led by bureaucratic apparatuses at the service of the Kremlin, i.e., of the political leadership of the Soviet bureaucracy which is the dominant social stratum in the USSR. For this reason the Communist Parties are interested, not above all in promoting the socialist revolution in their respective countries, but in bringing their weight to bear on their national bourgeoisies so that they will apply a foreign policy favorable to the interest of the foreign policy of the Kremlin.

The Transitional Programme, on the contrary, which reflects the thought and experience of an authentic revolutionary movement, aims really at aiding the highest possible revolutionary activity of the class, while starting out from its most elementary demands.

I must say that in 1938 several of the slogans of the Transitional Programme, such as the sliding scale of wages to fight inflation, the sliding scale of hours to fight unemployment, workers' control, factory committees, nationalizations under labor control, militias, etc., seemed far from the mentality of the masses. But since these slogans correspond in spite of everything to the objective conditions of capitalism, the masses, educated by their own experience, did not fail, at one moment or another in their struggles, to make them their own. Twenty years later, the Transitional Programme still has, to a very large extent, a surprising timeliness and youthfulness. This is particularly true of the spirit animating its conception, for it is the only one to guide a vanguard really decided to mobilize the masses for a fight not for *reforms*, but for *revolution* against the capitalist power and regime.

It takes a Transitional Programme aimed in the same way as that of 1938 effectively to promote such a struggle.

About a year after the foundation of the Fourth International, the Second World War, as foreseen, broke out.

The Fourth International was — from the ideological viewpoint — better prepared for such an event than any other workers' organization. Particularly since Hitler's rise to power, our movement had several times emphasized the almost fatal trend toward war. That war, we said, would once more be basically an

inter-imperialist war, for a new partition of the world, between the victors and the vanquished of the Treaty of Versailles. Granted, this time, independently of the way in which this war began, it would at a given moment also involve the U S S R. But this event would not be able to transform the inter-imperialist war into a "just" war, i e, this should not lead the revolutionary movement to support the eventual imperialist allies of the U S S R.

According to the theses worked up already in 1934 by the International Secretariat of our organization on "War and the U S S R," the duty of revolutionaries would be to stand for "revolutionary defeatism" in all imperialist countries, whether enemies or allies of the U S S R, and to consider the war "just" only as waged by the U S S R itself. And it is that line which fundamentally guided us during the Second World War.

Leon Trotsky had foreseen, before anyone, the possibility of a Stalin-Hitler Pact, which was in fact concluded in August 1939. But despite the denunciation we made of this pact, for the conditions under which it was concluded, *which disoriented the proletariat*, we did not for all that change our principled attitude toward the *U S S R, a degenerated workers' state*: its "unconditional" defense against imperialism or native reaction, i e, independently of this or that policy of its political leadership, of the Kremlin. We strictly applied this attitude during the entire Second World War.

In August 1940 our young International, weak in terms of mass support, received a blow much more terrible than that isolation (which had been foreseen): the assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico, where he had taken refuge a few years previously, by an agent of the G P U. We thus lost the most powerful

intelligence of the Revolution and the firmest and most exemplary character for revolutionary combat.

The war, by growing in intensity and becoming more complex in character through the entry of the U S S R as well, brought very strong pressure on our organization. It was necessary to fight simultaneously against the illusions of the masses, drawn on by patriotic currents in both the democratic and the fascist camp, against imperialist repressions, and against the policy and repression of the Kremlin.

In face of the "democratic" or fascist imperialists, it was necessary to hold to the line of "revolutionary defeatism," i e, of revolutionary propaganda against the war and against the capitalist regime, independently of its military effects.

In face of the policy of the Kremlin, the new ally of the "democracies" against fascism, it was necessary to combine the defense of the U S S R as a workers' state with a pitiless criticism of the opportunist, chauvinist, and class-collaborationist policy that the Kremlin was preaching to the Communist Parties of the so-called "democratic" countries, allies of Roosevelt, Churchill, and de Gaulle, as well as revolutionary propaganda for the overthrow of the political regime of the Soviet bureaucracy in the U S S R at the first opportune moment. Such a policy by the Fourth International was not such as to make easy the rallying of great masses around its banner or to save it from the repression of both sides. But in our opinion this policy remained faithful to the principles of revolutionary Marxism, and, within the limits of analogy, it was, in the concrete conditions of the Second World War, the equivalent of the policy followed by Lenin during the First World War.

The Fourth International paid a heavy price for the

application of this policy, more particularly in the countries of continental Europe occupied by the Nazis, and in China ruled by the dictatorial regime of Chiang Kai-Shek. Our victims, shot by the Nazis or exterminated in the concentration camps, are numbered in the hundreds, particularly in France, Germany, Poland, Greece, Holland, Austria, Belgium, and elsewhere.

We lost during the war a large number of the leading cadres of our movement, long-time revolutionary militants well-known in their respective countries, such as Comrade Marcel Hic, general secretary of our French organization, dead in a concentration camp in Germany, the Belgian comrades Lesoil and Léon, who suffered the same fate, the Italian comrade Blasco, victim of Stalinist repression at the moment of the "Liberation," the Greek comrade Pouliopoulos, executed by the fascists in Greece in 1943, the German comrade Widelin, and so many others.

The only public trials that the Nazis dared to hold in continental Europe were in Holland and Austria, against Trotskyist or pro-Trotskyist militants. As a result of these trials, several of them were executed. In the United States, Britain, Ceylon, and India, countries on the "democratic" side, only Trotskyist leaders were imprisoned for their consistent struggle against the war and against imperialism.

The attitude of several Trotskyist militants during this period, among humanity's blackest, was truly heroic and in every way worthy of that taken, according to the reports of most objective observers, by their Russian comrades, victims of Stalinist repression.

I shall permit myself to quote some examples.

The German comrade Widelin was the editor-in-chief of the only printed periodical published during

the occupation of Europe which preached a policy of international fraternization with the German workers in uniform. This paper was called *Arbeiter und Soldat*, and was distributed in France, Belgium, and elsewhere among the German soldiers. One day the Gestapo in Paris arrested a French woman comrade, and then as a result three other comrades, among them Comrade Widelin, who was at the time living illegally in Paris. The fate of these four comrades was among the most fantastic of that period.

One of the comrades, arrested and transferred to the central headquarters of the Gestapo in Paris, was able, by jumping out of a second-storey window, to escape. Two others, two women comrades, were sent to a concentration camp in Germany. One of them had the good fortune to survive, and is now living in England, married to an English comrade. The other, after an ill-omened escape in Germany in the winter of 1944, was recaptured, tortured, and driven insane; she died in deportation. As for the fourth comrade, Comrade Widelin, the day after the escape of his companion, he was taken to the Bois de Vincennes in Paris and shot.

Yet he did not die. Left for dead in the woods, he was found still alive by a person who transported him to the Rothschild Hospital in Paris. From there we received a message from him, and we decided on and organized an attempt to carry him off. But at the last minute a member of the hospital staff warned the Gestapo, which was able to transfer him to its own headquarters before we could intervene. The Gestapo then finished off Comrade Widelin a second time, and definitively.

I shall also quote the case of the Greek Comrade Pouliopoulos, former secretary of the Greek Commu-

nist Party, who, before being executed by the fascists in 1943, addressed the execution squad in its own tongue, producing a real mutiny among them. The soldiers refused to fire on him and his companions, and it was the officers who had to execute them with their revolvers.

Lastly, I shall quote another example, which I think is almost unique, that of a Belgian worker comrade, a miner by trade, Comrade Gallois, who died just a few weeks ago. This comrade was deported to the famous extermination camp of Buchenwald. One day the SS, laughing, presented before the assembled prisoners a whole group of human beings who were walking skeletons, moribund, repugnant with filth, covered with vermin. They were Jews.

The SS were getting ready to gas them — unless, they said, there were among the prisoners (themselves in a state of extreme weakness) someone who would have the patience, and the courage, to clean these miserable creatures one by one. Among the prisoners there were men of every religious belief and political opinion. But nobody offered himself for such a task.

Wait — yes, one. The humble mine worker, who had never distinguished himself by any exploit in civilian life, Comrade Gallois, stepped out of the line-up and calmly asked the SS to promise to spare the lives of these vermin-infested Jews if he cleaned them up. And that is just what he did, with simplicity but also with tenacity and extraordinary abnegation, for days and days on end.

I did not have the opportunity to greet Comrade Gallois before he died, and I shall here permit myself respectfully to salute his memory on behalf of our whole international organization.

Where Stalin in 1943 dissolved the Third Inter-

national in order to pacify his imperialist allies of the “democratic” camp, the Fourth International held, in February 1944, at the height of the war, in occupied France, an International Conference, assembling the delegates of several European sections, which was able to work, in the strictest illegality, for six days.

The Fourth International successfully met the test of the war in both the ideological and organizational fields, and emerged strengthened therefrom.

In 1946 it assembled a new International Conference in which, beside the sections of continental Europe, British and American comrades participated.

In 1948 was held the Second World Congress of the Fourth International, in which delegates from all the continents took part. This Congress drew a balance-sheet of the international situation created by the developments of the Second World War, and adopted new statutes which reaffirmed the character of the organization as a World Party governed by the principles of democratic centralism.

Since that date the Fourth International has regularly held these World Congresses about every three years: the Third in 1951, the Fourth in 1954, and the Fifth in 1957. These congresses are important not only because of the fact that participation in them increases from one congress to the next, reflecting the International's organizational progress, but also because of the deepening of the International's theoretical and political work, expressed in the documents formulated at these congresses.

The Third World Congress, held in 1951, occupies an important place in the post-war history of the Fourth International. In reëvaluating the international situation it affirmed that the global relationship of forces between imperialism and the Socialist Revol-

ution in all its forms — workers' states, colonial revolution, revolutionary movements in the capitalist countries — was changing in an almost *irresistible* and *irreversible* way in favor of the Revolution. From this evaluation, made at a date when the power of American imperialism still appeared to be *decisive*, there flowed a whole series of revolutionary implications, including the precipitate crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy. The Third World Congress furthermore began — basing it on solid theoretical and political considerations — the so-called *entrist* tactic within the big mass organizations, Social-Democratic or Stalinist.

The Fourth World Congress, held in 1954, drew up very important documents on the conditions that had determined the rise of Stalinism and on their modification which from then on would bring about its decline and fall; also on the *entrist* tactic.

And lastly, the Fifth World Congress synthesized and deepened all that the International had achieved in the field of the evaluation and prospects of the international situation, the evolution of the USSR and Stalinism, and the tactic for building new revolutionary Marxist parties.

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Now what does the Fourth International stand for at the present time, organizationally and politically? What is this organization and what does it want?

We are, above all, an international organization, a single World Party, which functions in a democratic-centralist way, with national sections in some 30 countries on all continents.

The general policy of the International is decided by majority vote at its World Congress, preceded by a thorough democratic discussion in all the national

sections. Our organizational regime dialectically combines, according to the situation and political exigencies, the broadest democracy in discussion with resolute unity in action.

The idea of an international organization, after having been at the base of the conceptions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin about the organization of the revolutionary proletariat, was later discredited by the miserable experience of the Second International and thereafter of the Third International. Some people profit from this to make a quasi-theory about the merits of an organization which is above all national, setting up only "fraternal links" with other national organizations. In the best of cases this conception visualizes the International as an arithmetical collection of separate national organizations which cooperate in this or that field. Thus, they say, they avoid falling under the control of a bureaucratic apparatus, and take national peculiarities into better account.

Now the Second International, if it ended badly, did so not because it functioned as an International, i.e., as a single World Party based on revolutionary Marxism and governed by democratic centralism, but because in reality it degenerated into a collection of separate national organizations, each dominated by its own bureaucratic apparatus.

As for the Third International, it degenerated only by falling under the control of the bureaucratic apparatus of a *single party*: that of the Soviet C.P.

The argument of national independence in reality often covers up the existence of a national bureaucratic apparatus which does not much like having an international democratic control over it. As for the argument that national independence is better for

preserving national peculiarities, it must be stressed that in our period of imperialism it is impossible to understand thoroughly what is peculiar in a given national situation without setting it up against the background of a correct analysis and understanding of the international situation. The particular is what it is only by comparison with the general.

By forming an integral part of a democratic international organization, the revolutionary Marxists of each country benefit by the advantage of a really international view and elaboration of their policy and of a correction of possible deviations of a national, and even nationalist, nature, thanks to a sort of mutual neutralization of such tendencies within the international organization, international above all in its world outlook, its policy, and its organizational structure.

The idea and the organization of the International express the revolutionary proletariat's unity in policy, organization, and struggle — a unity most difficult to achieve, by fighting against national prejudices and pressures in the national ambience of each country. But we believe that this idea and organization still remain at the highest level, which must be attained in order to vanquish capitalism and set up a genuine socialist regime. We are, therefore, a democratic international organization that aims at promoting, by the propaganda of its ideas and the action of its militants rooted in the real mass movement, a mass International with revolutionary Marxist parties everywhere.

And now what is our current policy in face of capitalism and the socialist system under construction in the USSR and the other workers' states?

We consider that capitalism emerged from the Second World War badly shaken, that the global relationship of forces between it and the Proletarian

Revolution in all its forms — workers' states, colonial revolution, metropolitan revolutionary movements — has not ceased to develop to its disadvantage; that, placed before such a relationship of forces, capitalism has theoretically the choice only between a Third World War and capitulation without a fight; that, in view of the weakened but still far from negligible strength of American imperialism, capitulation without a fight is still practically improbable; that the best way for the revolutionary proletariat to weaken imperialism still further, and, in case of need, to disarm it more rapidly, thus limiting the inevitable destructions of an atomic war, is to push the revolutionary struggle for the seizure of power everywhere, particularly in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

The unquestionable economic boom that American and European capitalism have been experiencing, especially during these last years, does not offset in the long run the loss of colonies which the irresistible current of the colonial revolution is freeing one after another, or the steady economic strengthening of the USSR and the other workers' states. What is more, this boom, far from signifying a new period of organic development of capitalism, is only conjunctural, and is now reaching its end.

Capitalism has nowise freed itself from its periodic crises. If these have up till now taken on the form rather of "recessions" than of real crises like that of 1929-1933, this is due to the increased part played by the intervention of the state controlled by the monopolists and the monstrous spread of the war economy, particularly in the United States. But in the economic competition between capitalism and the workers' states, the latter have attained an advance in rhythm that has become irresistible and irreversible.

Capitalism is heading into greater economic difficulties than ever before, and the period of its euphoria already belongs to the past.

What most weakened capitalism, especially in the first post-war decade, was the spectacular victories of the colonial revolution, following on that of the Chinese Revolution in 1949. The steady, irresistible, and irreversible break-up of capitalism's colonial domain shattered its equilibrium in what is in the long run a catastrophic way, and in this sense has already sealed its historical fate. The colonial revolution is in reality only one aspect of the more general revolution that marks our century, the Socialist Revolution. It tends in reality to be a Permanent Revolution in the sense that our movement uses this term.

Even where the colonial revolution is at present headed by bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leaderships that are trying to limit its scope and keep it within the framework of bourgeois-democratic demands and reforms — independence from imperialism, national unity, agrarian reform — those leaderships prove incapable of effectively solving even these tasks, and at a given stage they inevitably enter into conflict with the masses of their countries, who are driving for the *social* deepening of the revolution.

From this point of view, these leaderships are historically *transitional*, and will be replaced by a genuinely revolutionary Marxist vanguard, the only one able to solve, under a regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat, both the democratic tasks and the socialist tasks properly so called.

Our movement *unconditionally* supports the colonial revolution against imperialism, i.e., independently of the class character of its political leadership. Thus for example we unconditionally support Nasser as

against imperialism, despite the fact that Nasser represents, not the proletariat, but the nascent nucleus of an industrial national bourgeoisie, and that he represses the workers' movement in his country. At the same time, naturally, the Egyptian Trotskyists, far from giving up their revolutionary propaganda against Nasser, are working in fact for the creation of an independent revolutionary Marxist party independent of Nasserism, which will struggle for the establishment of a Workers' and Peasants' Government in Egypt and at the head of the United Arab Socialist Republic of tomorrow.

Our movement recognizes the revolutionary vanguard role currently played by the colonial masses, and calls on the metropolitan proletariat actively to support the colonial revolution, to catch up on the dangerous lag existing between the degree of revolutionary spontaneity of the colonial masses and the comparative apathy of the metropolitan proletariat, particularly toward the colonial revolution.

In this matter it is not enough to attribute the whole fault exclusively to the Socialist and Communist leaderships — though in fact they do have the main responsibility for this state of affairs; it is necessary also to make a direct appeal to the class to become aware of its being way behind the colonial masses, and to remind it of its duties toward its colonial brothers.

The historical development of the Proletarian and Socialist Revolution in our time has taken a different line from that counted on by the founders of Marxism and by Lenin. It is now clear that, beginning in Russia, a relatively backward country, the Revolution is progressing, as it were, from the periphery to the centre. It involves first of all the colonial and de-

pendent countries before reaching the countries of capitalist Europe, and will be completed by the victory to be won over American capitalism, far-and-away the most important citadel of world capitalism, and, in all likelihood, the last that will fall.

The other factor weakening capitalism is the steady and accelerating economic and cultural strengthening of the USSR and the other workers' states. This strengthening is reflected also in military effectiveness and potential.

The fact that the economy of these countries is currently progressing at a higher rate than that of capitalism (almost double) and in a steady way — without experiencing slumps as a result of "recessions" or crises — has a historical importance that is going to have more and more weight in forming political developments. This fact, furthermore, brings proof of the historical superiority of the *statified and planified economy* that characterizes the social and economic structure of these countries.

It is this structure that justifies our calling these states *workers' states*, however degenerated or deformed their political regime may be, judged from the viewpoint of the norms of a genuinely proletarian and socialist state. For the statified and planified economy, far from being the result of a sort of organic evolution of capitalism or of "state capitalism," is in reality the result of a revolutionary destruction of capitalist society and of the bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, history has not furnished any proof that one can do without statification and planification of the economy — especially in dependent and colonial countries — in an advance toward building a socialist regime. That is to say, in the concrete reality of the revolution in our time, the statified and pla-

nified economy appears both as the result of a revolution and as the initial stage in the building of a socialist regime capable of developing, far more than capitalism can do, the productive forces of society.

It is for that reason that our movement unconditionally defends the historic conquest of the statified and planified economy against imperialism and against native reaction. At the same time our movement carries on its revolutionary opposition to the *political regimes* of the USSR and the other workers' states, which are assumed not by the proletariat, democratically organized in *soviets*, *trade unions*, and *parties*, but by a privileged social stratum, the bureaucracy.

Our movement is opposed to this bureaucratic police regime, and calls for the genuine socialist democracy at which Lenin was aiming in his time. Against the bureaucracy in power, our movement engages in propaganda for its revolutionary overthrow by the masses of the Soviet Union and the other workers' states. We consider that, if objective conditions in the capitalist, colonial, and dependent countries are determinant for the overthrow of the social regime of capitalism and imperialism, so also the objective conditions that exist in the USSR and the other workers' states are determinant for a struggle culminating in a *political revolution* having as its goal the overthrow in these countries, not of the *social regime*, but only of the *political regime*.

That was the meaning of the 1956 events in Poland and Hungary, signifying the beginning of the political revolution in those countries, for the purpose not of returning to capitalism but of setting up genuine socialist democracy. We consider that the prospect of the political revolution is valid for all those countries,

in various forms and by various ways, beginning with the U S S R, the citadel of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Our conception of socialist democracy involves not only the existence of democratic soviets, of free trade unions, independent of even the workers' state, and of a revolutionary Marxist party that recognizes the right to form ideological tendencies within itself, but also the right to form several parties provided they respect the constitutional legality of the workers' state. This last-mentioned right is for us the keystone of the whole edifice of socialist democracy, for in reality it determines the democratic character of the soviets, the trade unions, and the revolutionary Marxist party.

Our movement considers that the historical conditions that brought about the birth and strengthening of Stalinism are now deeply changed, and in reality are now bringing about an irremediable crisis in Stalinism, heading for its fall. From this point of view, for example, Khrushchev, despite all his recantations, his steps backward, and even his crimes, cannot be a second Stalin. But the now inevitable fall of Stalinism, which will be the finished expression of the revolutionary process of our time, will not come about in a simply "evolutionary," "reformist" way, but by the inevitable revolutionary upsurge of the masses at a given moment.

In a general way, our outlook on developments remains deeply revolutionary and optimist. Far from believing in pacification, in "new ways" of "peaceful coexistence" and peaceful evolution, our movement considers that the class struggle is heading toward a paroxysm, but in a relationship of forces more and more favorable to the revolution as against both capitalism and the Soviet bureaucracy. All questions will

be settled by struggle, including the highest forms thereof: war and revolution.

Indeed, we are witnessing an interpenetration of these two forms in a higher dialectical synthesis: revolution-war, in which each important advance of the revolution is brought about by a struggle against imperialism's counter-revolutionary war. The political revolution, furthermore, remains the decisive form of the struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy and the police and army apparatuses at its disposal.

To face up to the culminating struggle that characterizes our period, a really life-and-death struggle between the reactionary and conservative forces and the forces of the Socialist Revolution, permanent and international, adequate organs are needed that synthesize to the highest degree the qualities of intelligence, character, and combativity of the international workers' movement, its traditions, its experience: genuine revolutionary Marxist parties, of a Bolshevik quality at the high level of the exigences of our mid-century, the most fantastically dynamic in all the history of humanity. That is the goal of our movement.

To attain it more readily, we decided to operate not only in an independent way by means of the organs of our independent activity, but also by patient and long-term work within the big mass organizations, Socialist or Communist according to the country. We have no illusions about these organizations, and we are not there to reform them. We consider them simply as *fields for work*, seeing that the really politically active part of the working class is organized within that framework.

The working class of our period is not the virgin one of the epoch of Marx and Engels, open to direct revolutionary propaganda. It has its structure in given trade-

union and political organizations. Faithful to the mission that Marx and Engels defined for communists in *The Communist Manifesto*, we decided to share in the concrete experience of the class, starting from the level at which that experience is being carried on. There is unfortunately no way of jumping over stages in matters of the class's political maturity, and creating a mass party: only when the class, by experience of its existent organizations and of important and repeated historical events, itself leaves these old frames, can a new ideological and organizational regroupment be attempted.

Our movement is convinced that by its present tactic of effective presence and participation in the real mass movement of each country, it makes a positive contribution to the process of the natural revolutionary regroupment of the class. We thus have the feeling that we are at present doing everything that the objective conditions permit the revolutionary Marxist vanguard to do, and thus preparing, to the best of our strength, the socialist future of humanity.

August 1958

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